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Patty Sands, *Editor*

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# PSCnews

*Public Service Commission of South Carolina*

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## Commissioner David Wright NARUC Chairman for Nuclear Issues and Waste Disposal

Commissioner David Wright has been appointed Chairman of the National Association of Regulatory Utilities Committee (NARUC) Subcommittee on Nuclear Issues and Waste Disposal. The announcement was made on June 12, 2007, by NARUC president Jim Kerr of North Carolina. Commissioner Wright had previously served as vice-chair of the subcommittee and is replacing Brian Moline of Kansas who is retiring.

Since being elected to the Public Service Commission three years ago to represent District 2, Commissioner Wright has been active in NARUC. In addition to serving on the Subcommittee on Nuclear Issues, he also serves on the Washington Action Committee and the Committee on Energy Resources and the Environment. Continuing his public service career, Commissioner Wright will utilize his leadership skills developed over the years as mayor of the town of Irmo, South Carolina, and House Representative from District 85 to expand his influence to the national level. Under his guidance, the NARUC staff in Washington, D.C., will work closely with Commissioner Wright to monitor activity on the federal level relating to the nuclear energy industry. As part of his duties, he will be asked by Congress to comment on proposed legislation and share his insight and NARUC's position on the issues.

The biggest issue facing Commissioner Wright is the Nuclear Waste Fund and the Yucca Mountain National

Repository that will be used for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.



With technological advances, Commissioner Wright must stay abreast of changes in the nuclear energy industry. There are now new ways to process spent nuclear waste that look very promising, and there is research being performed on new breeders and fast reactors. Commissioner Wright sees his position in NARUC as an "educational effort" to inform the leaders on Capitol Hill, the leaders in each state, and the public on the need for safe, cost effective nuclear energy.

Welcoming the opportunity to serve as chairman of the subcommittee, Commissioner Wright knows it will require additional time, especially in the area of communicating with key players and organizations involved in the issues, but he is keen on including many people in the process. He wants to keep the momentum moving forward as it concerns nuclear issues and waste disposal while increasing awareness and education on the critical issues.

## From the Chair...*O'Neal Hamilton*



In my previous column I wrote that the PSC's hearing on net metering was attracting a great deal of public interest. Net metering programs allow customers with their own sources of energy generation (such as solar panels, windmills, biomass or

small hydroelectric generators) to transmit their excess production onto the electric grid for resale by the power company to other customers. By receiving credit for the electricity which they transmit to the grid, the generating customers offset the cost of their electricity consumption with their excess production.

The Commission recently held a day long hearing on proposed net metering standards in which it considered proposals from the state's three investor owned electric utilities, Duke Energy, Progress Energy, and South Carolina Electric & Gas, the Office of

Regulatory Staff, and several individual consumers. Numerous citizens also shared their views in public comments to the Commission. All of the parties agreed that the state would benefit from a net metering program, so much of the discussion centered on how the program would work.

The Commission ultimately adopted a joint proposal on net metering from industry and the Office of Regulatory Staff, with some modifications. Initially, net metering customers will be placed on "time of use" rates, under which the cost of power varies accordingly to when it is used. However, because most customers opt to pay "flat rates" for their power, the Commission also requested that the companies devise a "mixed" net metering program which would allow customers to pay flat rates for power consumption, but obtain credit for their excess generation based on time of use rates.

With this recent decision, South Carolina has taken a step forward in a nationwide movement to encourage the development of alternative energy sources. The Commission will monitor the development of net metering over the coming months to determine if more changes are needed to make the program effective. I look forward to sharing the results with you.

## Alternative Energy Technology Has Arrived

The alternative technology movement has arrived in South Carolina. The South Carolina Energy Office reports that there are 158 solar water heating and photovoltaic installations in our state. These systems range from residential solar water heaters to solar panels generating electricity for business and government operations. The Public Service Commission recently adopted net metering standards for privately owned utilities, which will allow small generators to obtain credits against their electricity bills for excess energy that they send to the power grid.

We increasingly hear discussion of biofuels. Biofuels are made from biomass, meaning biological material, such as plant matter, wood, agricultural and animal waste, sewage, and other organic materials. Ethanol is a mixture of biofuel and gasoline; the biofuel can be made from corn, sugarcane, palm oil, soybeans, and other crops. According to the USDA there are 15 biodiesel distributors in South Carolina, most of them in the Greenville-Spartanburg area. Santee Cooper and BMW also employ landfill gas to generate electricity.

A new law passed this year will increase our state's focus on alternative energy sources. Act 83 of 2007 combines the South Carolina Hydrogen Infrastructure Act and the Energy Freedom and Rural Development Act. The Hydrogen Infrastructure Act is designed to put South Carolina at the forefront of the "hydrogen economy" by providing grants, tax credits, and sales tax exemptions to enterprises that employ hydrogen technology.

### In Brief...

By *Charlie Terreni*,  
Chief Clerk and  
Administrator



The Energy Freedom and Rural Development Act extends sales tax rebates to buyers of vehicles powered by alternative fuel. It provides incentives for the purchase of alternative fuels or the production of electricity or methane gas from biomass resources, and allows income tax credits for expenditures made in the research and development of cellulosic ethanol and algae-derived biodiesel, corn or soy based ethanol facilities, and solar energy systems.

The existing projects and the recently enacted incentives show that alternative energy technology is not an abstract concept; it is being developed and applied now. Business and government in South Carolina have taken important steps to allow our state to be part of this worldwide movement.

## Commission Hires New Court Reporter and Audit Advisor

### *Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM*



Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM was recently hired by the Public Service Commission to replace MaryJane Cooper, who retired as the Commission's court reporter. Jo has been a court reporter since 1979 and most recently worked with the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Commission.

Born and raised in Charleston, West Virginia, Jo attended West Virginia University. During this time, her mother persuaded her to begin training as a court reporter since she herself was a shorthand court reporter with the federal government and active in developing training programs for new court reporters. Jo continued down this career path and received her Certified Verbatim Reporter (CVR) credentials in 1980 and her Certificate of Merit (CM) the following year.

Currently serving as the president of the National

Verbatim Reporters Association and co-chair of the Committees on Education, Continuing Education and Strategic Planning, Jo looks forward to assisting and influencing the voice-writing professionals' organization in its continued growth and development.

Jo has been in Columbia since 1991 and enjoys living in the countryside of Kershaw County, where she has ample room for her dogs and cats. In 2002 her grandmother came to live with her, and she enjoys having family close at hand once more.

Outside of work, Jo likes to read a great deal, especially science fiction and mystery novels. Jo also volunteers her time at the International Center for Birds of Prey near Charleston, South Carolina, working with the medical clinic treating and rehabilitating raptors in hopes of returning them to the wild. She has been involved in a number of releases in the Columbia area, and at night when she hears a Barred Owl in the nearby woods, she gets the satisfaction of knowing that may be one of the birds she assisted.

Jo is looking forward to being a court reporter with the Public Service Commission and improving her voice-recognition reporting system while working toward her Realtime Verbatim Reporter certification.

### *Lynn Ballentine, CPA*

Lynn Ballentine, CPA recently joined the Advisory Staff at the Commission. As a member of the Advisory Staff, Lynn is responsible for analyzing accounting issues involving regulated utilities and advising the Commissioners on pending cases.

Lynn comes to the Commission after previously working as a senior auditor with the South Carolina Legislative Audit Council. As an auditor with LAC, Lynn had to possess general knowledge in the accounting methods of many businesses, but now that she is at the Commission, she will be able to focus and develop expertise in the area of regulatory accounting, which has been an interest of hers for many years.

Having lived in Columbia since she was twelve years old, Lynn attended Columbia College earning a degree in Business Administration and started her career in auditing, working with the Public Service Commission and then SCANA. She received her Certified Public Accountant license in 1992 and has worked over the years primarily in the area of auditing. During this time, Lynn also took a few years off to become a stay-at-home mother to her two children, Candace, now eleven, and Bennett, age eight. Lynn is a member of the South Carolina Association of CPAs.

Growing up, Lynn enjoyed the small town life that Washington, Pennsylvania offered, but her parents grew weary of the long commutes to work and snowy winters and opted for the more tolerable climate of South Carolina. They moved to the St. Andrews area of Columbia, and Lynn and her husband, Roger, and their children, now live in close proximity to where she spent her young adult years.

For relaxation, Lynn likes to take bike rides with her children and enjoys cooking. She is also very active in her children's school and sporting activities. The Ballentines attend Ebenezer Lutheran Church.

The regulatory environment has changed greatly over the years and Lynn is anxious to learn all she can. She has audited many state agencies and is ready to put her experience to work here at the Commission.





## *Public Service Commission of South Carolina*

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INSIDE —> Commissioner David Wright — Net Metering — New Hires — AND MORE!

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PSC Staff Participates in Red Cross Blood Drive  
Members of the Public Service Commission recently participated in a Red Cross blood drive held in the Synergy Business Park. Shown above are staff members who donated "the gift of life."

